

Despa House
538 Lockerbie Street
Indianapolis
Marion County
Indiana

HABS No. IND-55

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. IND-55

DESPA HOUSE

Location: 538 Lockerbie Street, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana; on the near east side of Indianapolis in the southern portion of the Lockerbie Square Historic District.

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Stroud (1977).

Present Use: Residence (1977).

Statement of Significance: This simple three-bay brick cottage was erected about 1862 and is typical of residences built for the working class. It has served as a school and day care center for a time, but has been restored and is now a private residence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1862-1863. The purchase price for Lot 2 of McQuat's subdivision of Out Lot 53 in 1862 was \$400 (Deed Record Town Lots 14, p. 555). The 1864 City Directory gives John Ernest Despa's residence as Lockerbie and Liberty (now North Park Avenue) (Buell and Williams' Indianapolis City Directory and Business Mirror for 1864, Indianapolis, 1864). In order to be listed in the 1864 Directory, Despa would have to have lived in the house in 1863. The Indianapolis City Directory for 1865 (Howes & Co., Indianapolis, 1865) identifies the location of the Despa house more precisely as the northwest corner of Lockerbie.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a partial chain of title. The legal description of the property is Lot 2 of McQuat's subdivision of Out Lot 53 in the City of Indianapolis. The records may be found at the Recorder's Office, City and County Building, Indianapolis, Indiana.

1862 Warranty Deed, September 5, 1862, recorded October 2, 1862, in Deed Record Town Lots 14, p. 555.
 Janet S. McQuat
 to
 John E. Despa, \$400.

- 1871 Will Record D., p. 567.
John E. Despa
to
Wilhelmina M. Despa, his wife, and
Anna Despa, his daughter.
- 1890 about June 1, 1890, Anna Despa died.
Anna Despa
to
Wilhelmina Despa, her mother and
John Henry Runge, her stepbrother.
- 1890 Wilhelmina M. Despa died.
Wilhelmina M. Despa
to
John Henry Runge
Will Record K., p. 286.
- 1913 John Henry Runge, died February 6, 1913 as record
owner. Estate Docket 42, p. 11684, and Will Record
Y., p. 517.

4. Alterations and additions: The one-story brick portion at the rear may be an early addition; its windows match those in the rest of the house. The wooden portions are additions, including a connection to the building to the east, on the corner lot.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The 1865 Indianapolis City Directory listed John E. Despa's occupation as painter. His wife, Wilhelmina, was listed in the 1890 Hutchinson's Indianapolis City Directory as a midwife.

A bronze plaque on the front of the Despa House says "The Lenora E. Kealing Kindergarten." According to her obituary notice, Mrs. Kealing was the wife of Joseph B. Kealing, Republican National Committeeman from Indiana. She was active in social work and served on the Day Nursery Board. She was also involved with the Family Welfare Society, the Marion County Board of Charities, and the Red Cross. Today the house is a private residence.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Record Town Lots 14, p. 555, Will Record D., K., Y.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Buell and Williams' Indianapolis City Directory and Business Mirror for 1864, Indianapolis, 1864.

Hutchinson's Indianapolis City Directory, Indianapolis, 1890.

Indianapolis News, November 18, 1926.

3. Likely sources not yet investigated:

Chain of title for Lot 1, adjoining Lot 2 on the east and at the corner of Lockerbie and North Park Avenue. City Directories give a variety of house numbers for John Ernest Despa and his wife, Wilhelmina, from 1865-1866 forward. They may have owned the corner lot as well, and it may have had another house on it before the present circa 1900 house was built. The house numbers given for Despa changed from 50 to 48, to 40; these changes may have no significance at all.

Prepared by Wesley I. Shank
Architectural Historian
Iowa State University
National Park Service
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This residence is a brick cottage typical of the mid-nineteenth century. It is located on the near east side of Indianapolis in the southern portion of the Lockerbie Square Historic District. This cottage is located directly east of the Riley House (IND-51).
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular; 24'-8 3/4" (three-bay front) x 60'-2"; one story with a partial second story and a partial basement.

2. Foundations: Red brick, common bond, headers generally every ninth course. Wall thickness varies from 8" to about 10" thick. Bricks are about 2 1/4" x 4" x 8". Good condition.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Walls are of red brick laid up in common bond. The south elevation has a stone belt course 7 1/2" high and one foot above the existing grade. The brick surfaces have been painted several times and it is difficult to determine if the house was built in an additive manner or constructed as a total entity in a short period of time. The exterior is currently painted white. All of the brick work needs cleaning and the joints should be pointed. A small section at the rear is made of wood frame with wood siding on the exterior.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls with wooden joists. First floor has 2" x 11" joists spaced at 17" on center. Second floor is also framed with wooden joists. Attic framing is difficult to analyze since access is possible only in the front portion of the house.
5. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: The only stoop is two stone steps at the main entrance (south elevation).
6. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys - one in each of the front rooms of the house and a third one at the rear of the brick extension.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is located on the southeast corner of the south elevation. It has a wide jamb and head of wooden construction. The rectangular frame around the door is composed of several types of moldings. The entrance is defined by a wooden element supported by massive wooden scroll brackets. The main door is recessed into the building with deep reveals which are plastered. The door itself has a large light and the transom above the door is set into a plain frame. A rear door located on the northeast corner of the east elevation leads to an enclosed passageway to the adjacent building.
 - b. Windows: The first floor windows on the Lockerbie Street facade (south elevation) and the windows on the other elevations are simple rectangular double-hung units of four-over-four lights set in wooden frames. The second floor

window on this facade is also double-hung with four-over-four lights, but has a semi-circular head. In addition, there are three small, round windows symmetrically arranged along the gable line; one at the peak of the gable and the other two at right angles to the east and west eaves. All windows are spanned with brick arches.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof over the brick part of the house is a gable with the ridge perpendicular to the facade. The roof over the small wooden section in the rear is hipped. The entire roof is covered with light colored asphalt roofing.
- b. Cornice: The eaves reveal the exposed ends of the rafters. The rafters over the brick portions end in a simple semi-circular design. The rafters over the wooden addition are completely plain. Five massive, wooden scroll brackets, located under the eaves, are evenly spaced on the south facade.
- c. Dormers: A simple wooden framed dormer is located on the west elevation of the main brick portion of the house. It has one wide, rectangular, wooden, double-hung two-over-two light window.

C. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Two rectangular rooms are entered through a narrow space from the stairway. There are crawl spaces under the brick and frame extensions.
- b. First floor: Four basic rooms with an entrance hall and stairway adjacent to the front two rooms. Two bathrooms are sectioned off in the third room from the front. The third and fourth rooms are accessible through the two front rooms. It is difficult to analyze the original function of the spaces on both the first and second floors because of extensive remodeling.
- c. Second floor: Two basic rooms located over front portion of house. Spaces are now divided by seven-foot partition walls for office space.

2. Stairways:

- a. Basement: Open, single run stairway opens into enclosed passageway located on the northeast corner of the east elevation of the house. The stairway is wooden and the risers are not enclosed.
- b. First floor: Main open well stairway is located in the front entrance hall. The stairs rise to a landing where they make a right angle turn before continuing to the second floor. These stairs have a continuous handrail and a turned newel post and balusters. The stair is similar to numerous other stairways in the immediate area. It is painted light grey.

3. Flooring:

- a. Basement: Concrete floor.
- b. First and second floors: All floors are wooden and most are covered with linoleum.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

- a. Basement: Brick walls are painted light grey.
- b. First and second floors: All walls and ceilings are plastered and either papered or painted light grey or beige.

5. Doorways and doors: The original doors are four-panel two-tiered doors and painted. Door and window trim is plain or with simple pediment. All the trim is painted.

6. Notable hardware: A few doors have surface mounted, iron box locks, most have varieties of modern locks.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Cast iron radiators (steam) are supplied from the adjacent building.
- b. Lighting: Electric with no fixtures of significance.
- c. Plumbing: Twentieth century with no fixtures of historical interest.

D. Site and Surroundings:

- 1. General setting: The house is located on the north side of

Lockerbie Street. The facade is the south elevation, the rear of the house is the north elevation. A three-foot, stone wall defines the lot line on the west. The sidewalk on the front (south) is concrete. A seven foot wire mesh fence surrounds the site on the east and north elevations. The building adjacent on the east is connected with a wood and glass enclosed passageway.

2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: Small temporary shed for storage purposes.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a cooperatively financed project in 1970 between the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana and the Historic American Buildings Survey.

The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Professor of Architecture David R. Hermansen (Ball State University) was the project supervisor. Student Architects Kathleen Hoeft (University of Oregon), Jannis Kirkland (Auburn University), Ronald J. Lake (Ball State University), and Phillip Wesley (Ball State University) provided the measured documentation. The remainder of the work done on this building was completed at Ball State University by three architecture students of Associate Professor of Architecture David R. Hermansen: George Clinton, Jay Korte, and Ronald Lake. Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University) did the written historical documentation. Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, provided the photographic documentation. This material was edited for HABS by Candace Reed in 1977.